

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 EURE-00 /069 W
-----092036Z 091521 /73

P R 091749Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9270
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
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AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
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AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION NATO
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
SECDEF WASHDC
JCS WASHDC
USEUCOM STUTTGART
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN
USNMR SHAPE

UNCLAS BRUSSELS 02280

E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS:PINT,BE
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT DISSOLVED,ELECTIONS SET FOR APRIL 17

REF: BRUSSELS 2172
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SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS ANNOUNCES DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT
AND FIXES THE DATE OF LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS FOR APRIL 17. TINDEMANS
MOVED FOR NEW ELECTIONS AFTER FAILING TO OBTAIN BROAD AGREEMENT
AMONG PARTIES ON A PROCEDURE FOR RESOLVING THE DEADLOCKED REGIONALI-
ZATION ISSUE.THUS AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION AND A DEFINITIVE

RESOLUTION OF THE REGIONALIZATION ISSUE IS FORECLOSED FOR THE LIFE OF THE SUCCESSOR LEGISLATURE - CONCEIVABLY FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS. ANGRY OPPOSITION CHARGES " VERITABLE COUP D'ETAT" AND CALLS FOR RESIGNATION OF GOVERNMENT.BUT TINDEMANS INTENDS TO GOVERN AS USUAL DURING PRE-ELECTION PERIOD.END SUMMARY.

1.TINDEMANS TODAY (MARCH 9)ANNOUNCED THE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT AND FIXED PARIL 17 AS DATE FOR LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS.HE STATED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WILL CARRY ON IN A MINORITY STATUS UNTIL A SUCCESSOR REGIME IS INSTALLED.

2.THE RIME MINISTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT - MADE TO THE PRESS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING A MORNING CABINET MEETING - WAS PRECEDED BY SEVERAL DAYS EFFORT TO DEVELOP A PROCEDURAL CONSENSUS AMONG THE PARTIES - SPECIFICALLY WHICH ARTICLES OF THE CONSTITUTION WOULD BE SPECIFIED AS OPEN TO AMENDMENT BY THE NEXT PARLIAMENT THUS PERMITTING THAT PARLIAMENT TO DEAL WITH THE REGIONALIZATION PROBLEM DEFINITELY. THE PRIME MINISTER STROVE FOR AGREEMENT IN A SERIES OF MEETINGS WITH PARTY PRESIDENTS THROUGHOUT MARCH 8.THESE PROVED FRUITLESS.REJECTING A SOCIALIST PARTY APPEAL FOR A 48- HOUR DELAY TO PERMIT ONE LAST EFFORT TO REACH AN ACCORD,TINDEMANS CALLED ON THE KING LATE LAST EVENING.(DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT IS A ROYAL PREROGATIVE.)

3.TINDEMANS DISCLOSED IN A MORNING PRESS CONFERENCE THAT ON MARCH 5 HE HAD PROPOSED TO THE SOCIALIST AND LIBERAL PARTIES FORMATION OF A PROVISIONAL 3-MONTH GOVERNMENT OF THE THREE FOR THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF REACHING ACCORD ON THE QUESTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE. THE SOCIALISTS REFUSED.IN LIGHT OF THAT REFUSAL,TINDEMANS SAID UNCLASSIFIED

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THE BELATE PSB BID FOR A SETTLEMENT IN 48 HOURS WAS NOT SERIOUS. HE EXPRESSED EXASPERATION WITH SEVERAL PARTIES'(SOME WITHIN HIS COALITION)UNWILLINGNESS TO FACE UP FORTHRIGHTLY TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ISSUE.TINDEMANS SAID BELGIUM'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS REQUIRED IMMEDIATE ELECTIONS AND THE INSTALLATION OF A STRONG GOVERNMENT TO DEAL WITH THEM.

4.OPPOSITION PARTIES- WHICH WERE DISCUSSING QUESTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER MADE HIS ANNOUNCEMENT - DENOUNCED TINDEMANS'ACTION AS A " VERITABLE COUP D'ETAT." OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN COLLS (PSB)CALLED FOR RESIGNATION OF GOVERNMENT AND CONVENING OF CROWN COUNCIL (GOVERNMENT AND MINISTERS OF STATE).

5.COMMENT: IT WAS PROFOUND DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN FLEMINGS AND FRANCOPHONES ON THE SHAPE OF A FEDERALIZED BELGIUM (WHICH THEY ALK AGREE SHOULD COME INTO EXISTENCE)WHICH ULTIMATELY PRECIPITATED ELECTIONS WHICH NO PARTY REALLY WANTS.THE MOVE OT THE SMALL RASSEMBLEMENT WALLOON PARTY TWO WEEKS AGO TO STAMPEDE ONGOING INTER-PARTY NEGOTIATIONS INTO AGREEMENT ON A " REGIONALIZATION"

BLUEPRINT SERVED IN THE END ONLY TO PAINFULLY EXPOSE THE FACT THAT NOT EVEN A BROAD CONSENSUS WAS TO BE HAD.AFTER TWO WEEKS OF FUTILE TRYING TO HOLD THINGS TOGETHER AND AT LEAST SET IN MOTION A PROCEDURE FOR DEFINITIVE RESOLUTION OF THE REGIONALIZATION QUESTION, TINDEMANS GAVE UP. HE DID SO,HOWEVER,NOT BY RESIGNING BUT BY DISPOSING OF THE PARLIAMENT HE O LONGER COULD DOMINATE.IN THIS HE EMULATED A PREDECESSOR,GASTON EYSKENS,WHOSE GOVERNMENT CONTINUED IN OFFICE IN 1971 AFTER PARLIAMENT HAD BEEN DISSOLVED.TINDEMANS INTENDS TO - AND CAN- CONTINUE BUSINESS AS USUAL FOR THE NEXT 40 DAYS, BARRING ONLY ACTIONS WHICH REQUIRE PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL OR NEW LEGISLATION.ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS THIS LEAVES HIM BROAD SCOPE FOR DECISION-MAKING.
RENNER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, GOVERNMENT REFORM, INTERIM GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770081-0704
Format: TEL
From: BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770379/aaaacrps.tel
Line Count: 129
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 4c6a5ebb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BRUSSELS 2172
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3166258
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PARLIAMENT DISSOLVED,ELECTIONS SET FOR APRIL 17
TAGS: PINT, BE, (TINDEMANS, LEO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4c6a5ebb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009